

GOAL SETTING & MEASUREMENT

Introduction

California's Adult Education Block Grant (AEBG) requires each of the state's 71 regional consortia to develop three-year plans that set measurable goals and monitor progress toward those goals annually. This research brief provides guidance to help adult education program administrators determine relevant goals, performance indicators, and outcomes based on best practices research and other evidence. In particular, this research brief focuses on how partner organizations can best collaborate during the goal setting and outcomes evaluation process to best meet the needs of adult learners within their community.



Guiding Principles

Goals and Outcomes in the Context of Strategic Planning

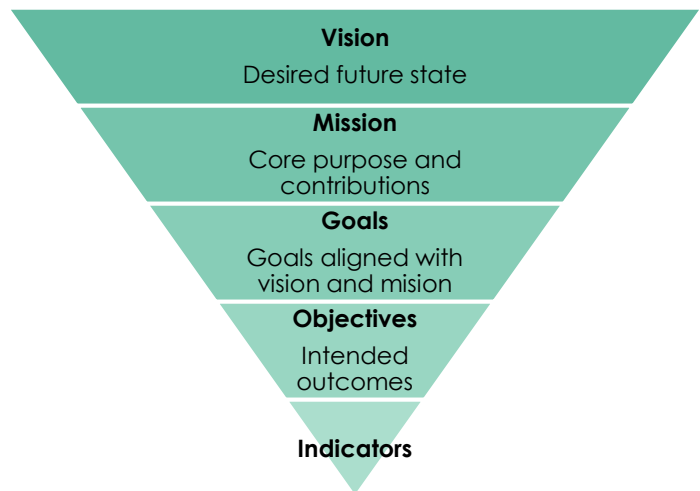
Organizational and program planning typically involve setting goals and objectives aligned with the organization's or program's vision and mission.¹ Goals are broad, long-range, related to mission, and not directly measurable whereas objectives are specific, short-range, related to intended impact, and directly measurable.² Metrics, often referred to as Key

¹ Goldman, C.A. and H. Salem. "Getting the Most Out of University Strategic Planning: Essential Guidance for Success and Obstacles to Avoid." RAND Corporation, 2015, p. 6. https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE100/PE157/RAND_PE157.pdf

² "Annual Planning and Evaluation at NOVA." Northern Virginia Community College, May 2011. http://www.nvcc.edu/college-planning/_files/writingannualplanningreport.pdf

Performance Indicators (KPIs), allow organizations and programs to monitor progress toward established objectives and goals.

Relationship of Goals and Objectives to Strategic Planning



Goal Setting

The SMART goals paradigm enjoys broad support from management and planning professionals as an effective outcomes-oriented planning tool for both organizations and individuals. According to the framework, goals should be specific and measurable, challenging yet achievable, related to organizational or program priorities and areas of interest, and clearly establish a timeline for achievement.



Specific
(simple, sensible, significant)



Measurable
(meaningful, motivating)



Achievable
(acceptable, actionable, agreed, attainable)



Relevant
(realistic, reasonable, resourced, results-based)



Time-bound
(time-based, time limited, time/cost limited, timely, time-sensitive)

Typically, the acronym stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound, though variations have emerged over time. SMARTER, for example, includes Evaluated and Reviewed as criteria for effective goal setting.

Performance Indicators

To measure progress toward achieving SMART goals and related objectives, organizations must select appropriate performance indicators (i.e., measurable). Broadly, effective indicators should be:³

- **Easily understood:** The measurement data is easy to understand and to compare with other data.
- **Controllable:** The individual/group must be able to influence the variable or attribute being measured.
- **Complete:** The measurement addresses all elements of the goal; it represents the numerical and qualitative portion of the successful outcome.
- **Cost-manageable:** The method of collecting measurement data should be affordable in terms of both time and financial resources.
- **Responsive:** Measurement data should be available within a time frame that allows for adjustment in the work plan if necessary.

As noted above, complete indicators will include both quantitative and qualitative measurements to accurately assess all aspects of a particular goal.⁴

Types of Indicators

Quantitative	Qualitative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number • Percentage • Time • Cost • Speed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes/No • Complete/ Incomplete

Source: RAND Corporation

³ Bulleted text reproduced verbatim from source: "Goal Setting: A Fresh Perspective." Oracle, June 2012, p. 12.

<http://www.oracle.com/us/%20media1/goal-setting-fresh-perspective-ee-1679275.pdf>

⁴ Ibid., p. 11.

Collaboration

The successful planning, implementation, and evaluation of strategic planning goals requires participation from diverse stakeholders. Indeed, a lack of faculty, staff, or other key stakeholder "buy-in" is one of the most common barriers to achieving a program's stated objectives. Institutions "will typically need to invest in strengthening the participation and capacity of planners and implementers."⁵



To ensure buy-in from key stakeholders, strategic planning experts recommend developing an "engagement plan."⁶ An effective engagement plan establishes guidelines for who participates in each phase of the planning, implementation, and evaluation process as well as the expectations associated with their participation. Notably, in adult education programs "Program staff must accept the responsibility for helping adult learners achieve all core outcomes that they identify as their goals—not just achieving learning gains or passing the GED."⁷

Principles in Practice

Data and Accountability Requirements

Under federal legislation including the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), states must collect and report accountability data for their adult education programs, including five "core indicators" to measure program effectiveness. Similarly, California requires AEBG recipients to collect and report certain core measures that are "effective, achievable, and aligned with related state and federal standards for occupational training and adult education programs."⁸ These measures include the total number of adults served by the consortium as well as the number of adults achieving the following milestones:⁹

⁵ Goldman, C.A. and H. Salem," Op. cit., p. 7.

⁶ Sanaghan, P. Collaborative Strategic Planning in Higher Education. National Association of College and University Business Officers, 2009.

⁷ Glass, D. "Goal Setting and Goal Getting in Adult Education Programs." CASAS National Summer Institute 2009, p. 11. <https://www2.casas.org/home/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.downloadFile&mapID=3132>

⁸ "AEBG Measures of Effectiveness." California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.

<http://aebg.cccco.edu/portals/1/docs/2016%20AEBG%20Effectiveness%20Report.pdf>

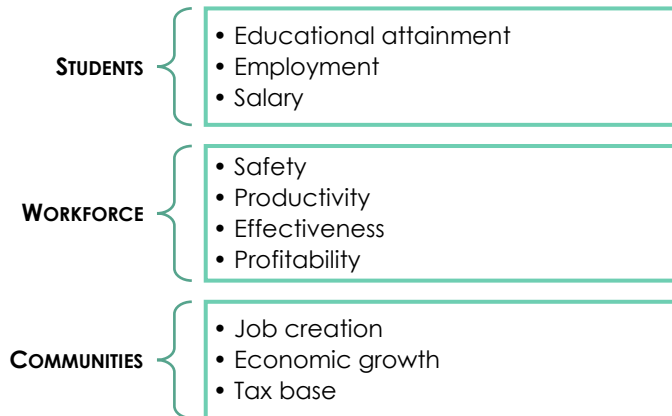
⁹ "Measuring Our Success: Data and Accountability Systems and Common Assessment in the California Adult Education Block Grant Program." California Department of Education and California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, August 2017, pp. 17-21.

Sample Learner-Centered Goals and Objectives for Adult Education Programs

- Improved Literacy and Basic Skills
- High School Diplomas or Recognized Equivalents
- Postsecondary Certificates, Degrees, or Training
- Placement into Jobs
- Improved Wages
- Transition to Postsecondary

Common Goals and Indicators for Adult Education Programs

While the AEBG Data and Accountability System will provide for a uniform, common dataset among all programs, many consortia and programs will begin or continue to collect additional datasets based on their program goals, needs, and unique adult learner populations. Goals for adult education programs often relate to outcomes for students, local workforce, or the broader community.



Source: Business Roundtable¹⁰

In the context of adult education programs, many professional organizations and topic experts suggest that goals and objectives should be **learner-centered**. In other words, goals should measure a learner's progress toward key objectives.

http://aebg.cccc.edu/Portals/1/docs/AEBG%20Reports/AEBGDatAccountabilityLegReport_Aug2017.pdf

¹⁰ "Counting the Hidden Assets: First Steps in Assessing the Impact of Community College Noncredit Education Programs on the Workforce and Local Economy." Business Roundtable, December 2009, p. 6.

<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/noncredit-education-workforce-economies.pdf>

To Enter Employment

- By the end of Week 3, participant will have created an error-free resume and cover letter.
- By the end of Week 5, participant will have taken a career-interest inventory.
- By the end of Week 7, participant will have registered as a "job seeker" on [an employment] website.

To Enter Postsecondary Education or Training

- By the end of Week 2, participant will have taken a career-interest inventory.
- By the end of Week 5, participant will have completed the FAFSA.
- By the end of Week 6, participant will have identified a post-secondary institution to attend and satisfactorily completed an application for admissions.

Source: CASAS¹¹

The figure on the following page offers specific examples of adult education program goals and associated indicators to provide context for how the principles and guidelines discussed previously can be applied in practice.

¹¹ Figure text reproduced nearly verbatim from source: Glass, D., Op. cit., pp. 19-20.

Sample Adult Education Program Goals and Associated Performance Indicators

Goal	Associated Performance Indicator(s)
General Adult Education Program Goals	
Ensure that programs are relevant to the current and future needs of students, employers, and the state/region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student, alumni and employer survey results • Number of degree programs in targeted areas • Professional licensing exam pass rates • Job placement/education progression
Ensure access to all qualified adult learners, including diverse populations and nontraditional students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographic data or ratios
Define the portion of the adult population to be served by the institution, and develop programs to encourage successful progression to degree among that targeted cohort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student attrition, retention, matriculation, persistence and degree completion rates, by type of student • Population by county, state and region in targeted age groups and educational levels
Enhance coordination with other state/regional governmental, educational and business entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of collaborative programs • Number of partner organizations
One hundred percent of students enrolled in AEFLA-funded programs will participate in career pathways activities that prepare them with the college and career planning, academic, and basic work force skills they will need to successfully transition into college and careers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare and disseminate a set of guidelines and requirements for career pathways plans to be submitted annually • Facilitate partnerships and implement projects at the state, regional, and local levels
Transition to Postsecondary	
Provide educational opportunities and services so that students are better prepared academically for post-secondary education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of basic skills classes offered • Success rates for classes
Educational Attainment	
Provide adults with access to lifelong education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of adults who have at least one year of postsecondary training
Workforce Training and Education	
Identify and support state/regional workforce training needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alumni and employer surveys • Number of participants placed in employment within the state/region
Provide adults with access to training and employment services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide integrated and effective customer service without barriers associated with separate, individual programs

Source: National Association of College and University Business Officers¹²

¹² Figure text adapted nearly verbatim from sources: [1] "Goal and Metric Outline." National Association of College and University Business Officers. <http://www.nacubo.org/Images/RevisedGoalMetricOutlineforweb.pdf> [2] "Washington's Strategic Plan for Workforce Development." Washington State, p. 47. <http://www.wtb.wa.gov/Documents/HSHW2008Adult.pdf> [3] "Advancing Work Force Readiness: Adult Education and Literacy for 21st Century Virginia." Virginia Department of Education, 2015. http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/adulted/adulted_strategic_plan.pdf

Strategies to Facilitate Collaboration and Engagement

To best facilitate collaboration and engagement organizations and programs should consider the relevance of broad and direct participation from various stakeholders such as:¹³

- ✓ Students
- ✓ Local program staff
- ✓ State-level personnel
- ✓ Partner agencies or organizations
- ✓ Workforce development organizations

Once key stakeholders have been identified, effective strategies based on experiences of community colleges and adult education program providers in California include:¹⁴

- Arrange **site visits** for faculty, staff, and program administrators of other adult education program locations throughout the consortium
- Host **community workshops** for experts and program administrators from throughout the adult education region “to provide input into [the] adult education plan.”
- **Incentivize participation** by communicating expectations, hosting monthly meetings or roundtables, organizing annual retreats, facilitating roundtables, offering coaching and other support and training, and developing new faculty and staff orientations.

¹³ “Information Sources and Strategies for Determining Needs: Key Stakeholders.” National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium.

http://naepdc.org/resource_library/program%20planning%20library/needs%20assessment/information%20sources%20and%20strategies/key_stakeholders.html

¹⁴ [1] “Practices with Promise: Relationship-Building Efforts Opens Door to Meaningful Collaboration, New School.” California Department of Education and California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office.

http://aebgpracticeswithpromise.com/showcase_story.asp?id=1099

[2] “Practices with Promise: Consortium Hosts Community Workshops to Gather Valuable Input for Regional Plan.” California Department of Education and California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office.

http://aebgpracticeswithpromise.com/showcase_story.asp?id=1070

[3] “Emerging Practices with Promise: Tri City Stakeholders Gather for Information, Input and Shared Insight.” California Department of Education and California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office. <http://aebgpracticeswithpromise>

[4] Goldman, C.A. and H. Salem,” Op. cit., p. 12.

[5] Bashford, J. and D. Slater. “Assessing and Improving Student Outcomes: What We Are Learning at Miami Dade College.” Community College Research Center, January 2008, pp. 13-14.

Consider the need for **staff cross-training** so that differences in policies and practices among partner organizations do not pose barriers to program success.¹⁵

¹⁵ “Washington’s Strategic Plan for Workforce Development,” Op. cit., p. 65.